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*Who became a professional medium after she reported the
"Hydesville rappings" of 1848, and who later confessed to fraud.*

When I was thirteen, I thought I would grow
pale as lace, forced to sew and sew
my brain into a filigree
of threads and holes. Then I learned

to crack my toe-bones until they echoed
like raps from beyond the grave.
Soon, my body was a bag of tricks,
a telegraphic alphabet: croaks, moans, clicks.

I wore black gloves and a veil wrapped
around my face like a wasp's nest.
I charged a dollar per deceased
and fifty cents for stillborn babies.

And what do you know? The spirits spoke,
rapping *shall we gather at the river*—
Do I wish I'd married a farmer
like my father, with burrs in his beard? No;

I cleared eight hundred bucks a year,
though the frontier of the dead was closed—
I moved like a pioneer into the deep
recesses of my knees and throat.

Knock-knock!

Who's there?

It was always me,
never an infant with coins on its lids,
never a fisherman caught in a net. I was the whole
heavenly host. I was as good as it gets.

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